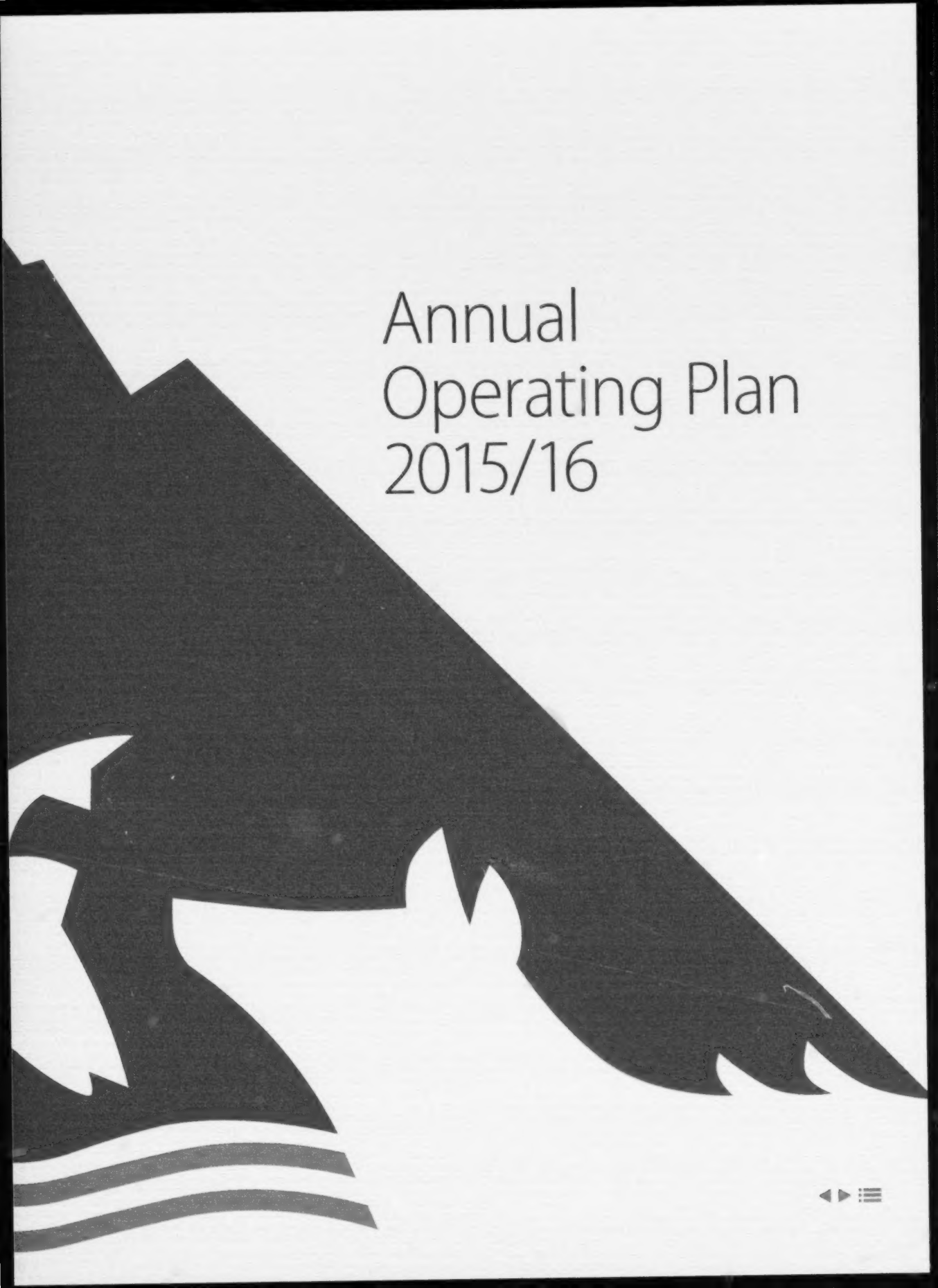

Annual Operating Plan 2015/16

Alberta Conservation Association

Conserving Alberta's Wild Side

ab-conservation.com

Our Vision

An Alberta with an abundance and diversity of wildlife, fish and their habitats; where future generations continue to use, enjoy and value our rich outdoor heritage.

Our Mission

ACA conserves, protects and enhances fish and wildlife populations and their habitats for Albertans to enjoy, value and use.

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Copies of this plan are available on our website at: ab-conservation.com/aop

Moose (*Alces alces*)
photo: ACA, Remote trail camera

1.0 Introduction

Alberta Conservation Association's (ACA) *2015/16 Annual Operating Plan* informs Albertans, our stakeholders and partners about the projects we are undertaking this fiscal year and how we are directing revenue to our various program areas. The plan guides us in fulfilling our mission to conserve, protect and enhance fish and wildlife populations and their habitats for all Albertans to enjoy, value and use. It also assists us with meeting our delegated responsibilities, through the *Wildlife Act*, to the Minister of Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development (ESRD).

When reviewing this document, you may notice a discrepancy between the numbers in the program budget and those stated in the Financial Summary (Section 8). This difference is attributed to how costs for activities such as training, planning, professional development and public speaking are budgeted. The budget is typically allocated within the program area and not within a specific project.

We report on budgets within 12 program areas: 1) Finance and Administration, 2) Business Development, 3) Human Resources, 4) Health and Safety, 5) Information Technology, 6) Information, Education and Communications, 7) Wildlife, 8) Fisheries, 9) Land Management, 10) Report A Poacher, 11) Landowner Compensation and Damage Prevention Program, and 12) Grants.

In 2015/16, we anticipate receiving roughly $3.5 million in partner (non-levy) and/or in land value. Projected levy revenue from hunting and fishing licences is $13,542,000. Thanks to the efforts of our dedicated employees and the generosity of our various donors and partners, most of this money will be directed back into conservation efforts. It stands as testament to the quality of our conservation work.

A key to the long-term viability of hunting and angling (and therefore conservation) in this province is the recruitment, retention and education of hunters and anglers. Historically, this collective group has been the driving force behind conservation initiatives in Alberta, and its members continue to contribute their time, effort and money (through levies on licences) into conserving Alberta's natural heritage. Considering the role they play in conservation, it is crucial that we continue supporting retention, recruitment and education activities. We will be expanding the number of mentored fishing and hunting events that we support and will continue working on communications campaigns that increase the awareness of conservation issues, of opportunities for getting involved in hunting and angling, and of the important role hunters and anglers play in conservation.

As of April 1, 2015 a levy increase will be implemented on hunting and angling licences in Alberta. The majority of hunters and anglers supported this levy increase during our consultation process over the last two years. What we heard loud and clear from our stakeholders was that they are willing to provide a greater level of financial support

to ACA, as long as we use these funds for increased conservation efforts.

Based on conversations with our stakeholders and ESRD, the majority of the increase in levy funds will go towards fish stocking, lake aeration, rehabilitation of native fisheries, fish and wildlife habitat enhancement, and pheasant release programs. Hatchery-raised fish prices have increased over the last three years, so the levy funds will allow ACA to stock more fish each year and potentially add more species to the mix. More levy funding also allows us to look for opportunities to add stocked and aerated lake locations in the province. ACA is focusing more on the rehabilitation of winterkilled native fisheries as well. We will explore, with ESRD, possible solutions to winterkill issues and work towards re-establishing native fisheries in these lakes. Protecting riparian areas is another key to ensuring long-term water quality and healthy fisheries, and so our riparian management projects will benefit from the increase in levy funds too. ACA has undertaken several riparian management projects over the last decade and will now be able to expand how many watercourses we positively impact. We are also planning to boost the pheasant release program throughout Alberta, creating new hunting opportunities. Habitat is vital to healthy wildlife populations, so together with more pheasant releases, we will grow our upland habitat enhancement and securement projects and continue looking for opportunities where we can have real impact for wildlife.

In our partnership with Hunting for Tomorrow, we will continue to reimburse the cost of the first WIN card for any youth who successfully completes the Conservation and Hunter Education Training Program. Along with receiving a reimbursement of $8.40 (cost of the WIN card), each youth receives an information package containing literature on each of our member groups, giving them an opportunity to learn more about Alberta's conservation community.

A significant part of our work involves developing and maintaining partnerships. These partnerships contribute to the success and scope of our conservation work. Our partnerships span across all our program areas, including fisheries, wildlife, land management, communications and administration. We will continue to work closely with our member groups, as well as non-member groups (e.g., Alberta Fish & Game Association, Pheasants Forever, and Ducks Unlimited Canada) and ESRD.

Our most important partners are Alberta's hunters, anglers and trappers, and we expect them, along with our many other partners and stakeholders, to hold us accountable. We expect to hear from you if we do not meet your expectations for the conservation work you have told us you want to see happening in Alberta.

1.1 Linkages 2009 – 2019 Strategic Business Plan

The *2009 – 2019 Strategic Business Plan* includes both a three-year and ten-year business plan. The objectives identified in the three-year plan are reviewed annually and updated if a significant change in strategic direction is warranted.

The *Strategic Business Plan* is a roadmap that keeps us focused on the strategies that influence our effectiveness. This clear sense of direction enables us to develop the most appropriate means of reaching our goals, which contributes to our success in fulfilling our Mission and achieving our Vision.

1.2 Regional Boundary Map

2.0 Business Program Areas

2.1 Finance and Administration

Finance and Administration programs focus on ensuring the smooth day-to-day operation of ACA. Tasks performed in these programs include asset management, investment decisions, financial reporting, payroll, payables, receivables and administrative support for our managers and Board of Directors.

Table 1: Finance and Administration Projects for 2015/16

Project		Primary Purpose	Expected Outcomes
Finance		Provide financial services that safeguard company assets. Ensure legal and contractual obligations are met. Provide accurate and timely information to ACA's decision makers.	· Manage assets effectively. · Provide complete and timely legal reporting. · Support management's information needs and facilitate effective decision-making. · Complete all financial functions to maintain and improve all financial processes. · Evaluate and minimize risk of loss or damage to ACA assets.
ACA	$692,717		
Partner	$15,000		
Total	$707,717		
Administration		Provide administrative support to all areas to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of internal operations.	· Support Board of Directors, executive and management. · Maintain building operations.
ACA	$1,892,646		
Partner	$49,500		
Total	$1,942,146		

Taber Pheasant Festival photo: ACA

2.2 Business Development

The Business Development program is focused on maintaining strong collaborative relations with our existing business partners as well as forming new partnerships with companies operating in Alberta. To do this, Business Development aims to increase ACA's profile in the business community by raising awareness and engaging companies in supporting and/or collaborating with our work on various conservation issues. Most of our business relationships become part of the Corporate Partners In Conservation program. In 2015/16, we will continue to explore ways of generating non-levy revenue, which will include: advertising sales, sponsorship of specific resource projects (fisheries, wildlife, land), support for our grants to community and research projects, corporate involvement in outdoor education and recreation events in communities across Alberta, and terrestrial conservation offsets.

Table 2: Business Development Projects for 2015/16

Project		Primary Purpose	Expected Outcomes
Business Development Support		Strengthen existing partnerships and develop new relationships that support ACA programs and projects.	· Increase non-levy revenue by 5% minimum above previous fiscal year. · Sign on a minimum of five new corporations and/or substantially increase contributions from five existing Corporate Partners in Conservation for conservation-related projects.
ACA	$263,384		
Partner	$173,084		
Total	$436,468		
ACA Store		Provide opportunities for staff to receive ACA-branded clothing for work (office, field, meetings and tradeshows) and personal use.	· Support the overarching ACA goal of increasing brand recognition in the general public and business community. · Maintain employee satisfaction with merchandise. · Work with Communications to ensure brand identity is achieved.
ACA	$22,692		
Partner	$0		
Total	$22,692		

2.3 Human Resources

Human Resources implements strategies and policies that meet organizational objectives. In 2015/16, our focus is on: 1) retention and recruitment, 2) training and development, and 3) creating a culture where employees are engaged and enthusiastic.

Table 3: Human Resources Projects for 2015/16

Project		Primary Purpose	Expected Outcomes
Program Coordination		Maintain market competitiveness and Human Resources innovation. Deliver services, programs, and communications which are valued by prospective and current employees. Commitment to promote and maintain environmentally responsible practices as an integral part of ACA business operations.	· Create a corporate culture that attracts and retains employees. · Increase job satisfaction to foster a productive work environment with a higher retention rate. · Recognize human capital as the resource that drives organizational success. · Maintain management system targets and evaluate successes. · Engaged employees who practice responsible practices in their work activities.
ACA	$174,480		
Partner	$0		
Total	$174,480		

Professional Development ACA $25,000 Partner $0 Total $25,000	Improve the talent development of ACA employees through professional development, career development, and improved performance management.	· Provide employees with opportunities to grow and take on new challenges through mentoring and training. · Document high level of job satisfaction in the annual staff survey. · Invest in professional development programs to improve leadership capabilities, job skills, and employee productivity. · Maintain a work environment that motivates and inspires.
Professional Memberships ACA $6,000 Partner $0 Total $6,000	Encourage employees to contribute to self-regulating professional associations committed to promoting excellence in professional practices.	· Increase awareness and credibility of ACA and our employees by promoting and maintaining high standards of professional competence and ethics.
Health and Wellness ACA $37,500 Partner $0 Total $37,500	Promote the achievement of work-life balance and wellness for our employees.	· Deliver a broader range of wellness programs and services for improved physical and mental health. · Maintain work-life balance through annual work plans. · Determine employee satisfaction levels through the annual staff survey. · Maintain levels of employee engagement and satisfaction.
Service Awards ACA $7,000 Partner $0 Total $7,000	Recognize employees for their loyalty, commitment and achievements.	· Provide service awards to employees who reach milestones. · Examine and source innovative service awards on an annual basis.
Online Survey ACA $1,000 Partner $0 Total $1,000	Determine level of employee satisfaction with various aspects of ACA.	· Conduct annual employee survey. · Identify challenges and develop action plans for improvements. · Review new employee survey format and determine whether questions asked supplied ACA with a good overview of employee satisfaction.
Recruitment ACA $10,000 Partner $0 Total $10,000	Use strategies such as social media, the web, ads and relationships with universities to recruit candidates. Create a corporate culture that attracts and retains employees of all generations.	· Promote ACA as an organization where employees can build their careers and expand their skills. · Hire employees with the knowledge, skills and ability to perform the job and whose beliefs and behaviours fit our organizational culture. · Work with universities and colleges to incorporate co-op and intern opportunities.
Career Fairs ACA $4,586 Partner $0 Total $4,586	Hire high-quality students for temporary summer work. Build employment relationships with students.	· Promote ACA to college and university students. · Provide co-op and intern opportunities to students

2.4 Health and Safety

The ACA Health and Safety program is an integral part of our operations, ensuring all work is conducted in a healthy and safe manner, regardless of the working environment or situation. Administered by ACA's Health and Safety Committee, the program relies on input from staff and management so that principles and practices remain up-to-date, comprehensive, easy to apply, and relevant for day-to-day operations. Maintaining the best possible Health and Safety program requires constant feedback through internal reviews of program materials and an emphasis on incident reporting and tracking.

For 2015/16, our goal is to ensure employees continue to embrace ACA's Health and Safety program and are kept safe and healthy. We will foster a company culture and work environment that ensures safety is a company priority which includes providing employees with the necessary training, equipment, materials and procedures required to conduct work in a healthy and safe manner. Improvements to the Health and Safety program are continuous.

For 2015/16, our key goal remains maintaining our Certificate of Recognition (COR) from Alberta Employment and Immigration.

Table 4: Health and Safety Projects for 2015/16

Project Name		Primary Purpose	Expected Outcomes
Health and Safety		Foster a company culture and working environment where all employees can work in a safe and healthy manner. Continue to monitor, maintain and improve the Health and Safety program so that it remains current, comprehensive, efficient and effective.	· Minimize workplace injuries as well as loss or damage to property, facilities, materials and equipment. · Integrate workplace safety into daily operations. · Provide ACA employees access to health and safety resources (e.g., forms, policies, procedures and other reference materials). · Provide employees with the necessary training, equipment, materials and procedures required to conduct work in a healthy and safe manner. · Respond to all health and safety incidents, including near misses. · Operate the Health and Safety program in a transparent and open manner. · Finalize revisions to Health and Safety information, manuals and forms based on COR audit reviews, staff suggestions and corrective actions from incidents. · Conduct internal audit in 2015 to comply with COR requirements. · Maintain COR Certification.
ACA	$145,666		
Partner	$0		
Total	$145,666		

2.5 Information Technology

The Information Technology (IT) program is responsible for the day-to-day operation, management and strategic direction of our IT services. The program's primary activities and applications include network and data security, corporate telephone systems, intranet website, financial applications, payroll system, GIS applications and any new applications or services that may arise throughout the year. Core responsibilities also include ensuring workstation and network functionality, providing end-user support, data recovery and data security.

Table 5: Information Technology Projects for 2015/16

Project Name		Primary Purpose	Expected Outcomes
Information Technology/ Systems		Manage and operate ACA's IT infrastructure. Provide technical support to all areas of ACA's IT and management systems. Provide IT initiatives that reduce ACA costs and environmental impacts without limiting future growth. Provide technical support to member groups where ACA provides operational software.	· Support and improve existing infrastructure to provide an efficient and stable environment and provide timely technical support to staff. · Expand cloud data storage to reduce costs and increase file and photograph capacity. · Work with staff to test new technologies that could be implemented for future growth. · Work with technology partners (Bell, Telus, Microsoft) to reduce yearly costs. · Maintain security of ACA network and data structures. · Resolve in a timely manner any server and network problems. · Provide member groups access to systems and support at a lower cost than they could find without ACA support.
ACA	$438,286		
Partner	$5,510		
Total	$443,796		

3.0 Resource Programs

3.1 Information, Education and Communications

The Information, Education and Communications program is dedicated to engaging the public. We develop creative visual communications that generate brand awareness; promote our work and achievements; engage current and new stakeholders; educate the general public; celebrate the partnerships and individuals that support our Mission and Vision; and recognize the contributions of hunters, anglers and trappers whose observations, knowledge and licence levies maximize our ability to conserve Alberta's wild side.

The Information, Education and Communications program is responsible for advertising, internal and external communications, social media, publications, website, media relations, brand awareness, outreach programs, and educational activities. In addition to these responsibilities, we maintain a cost-effective program through partnerships and in-kind support. Advertising sales offset the production costs of our publications, and corporate partners cover costs associated with our education and outreach events.

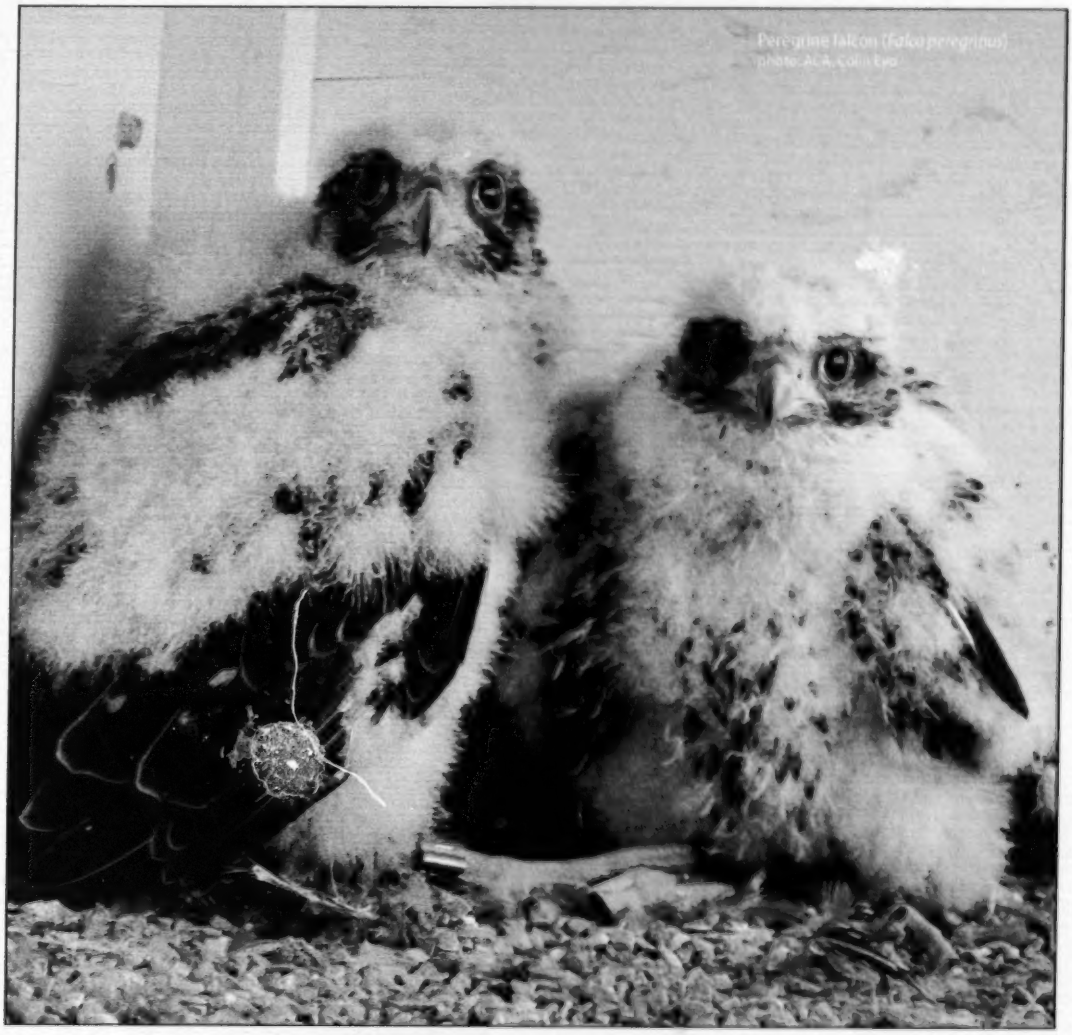


Table 6: Information, Education and Communications Projects for 2015/16

Communications			
Project		**Primary Purpose**	**Expected Outcomes**
General Advertising ACA Partner Total	$18,946 $0 $18,946	Increase general public awareness of ACA as an organization, key ACA programs and projects, and relevant conservation issues in Alberta.	· Identify key advertising opportunities and implement strategies that align with the Strategic Business Plan's four-year objectives. · Conduct external survey to determine recognition rates and attitudes of the general public.
Social Media **Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Constant Contact** ACA Partner Total	$37,727 $0 $37,727	Use social media to connect with our existing stakeholders as well as new audiences by highlighting the projects and events of ACA and member groups as well as related conservation issues in Alberta. Assist ESRD with promotion of the Aquatic Invasive Species Program, Family Fishing Weekends, and Waterfowl Heritage Days youth inititatives.	· Produce and deliver monthly Constant Contact e-newsletter as a tool to promote important news and events. · Promote various ACA activities and events that occur throughout the year including: tradeshows, peregrine cameras, fish stocking dates, Taber Pheasant Festival, Kids Can Catch, Archery Days and Waterfowl Warmup. · Interact daily with audiences on Facebook and Twitter, and respond to questions. · Increase awareness of conservation issues such as aquatic invasive species and member group activities. · Increase social media reach by 20%. · Provide monthly social media stats to the Management Team. · Assist member groups and other organizations/partnerships with social media resources.
Internal Communication Needs ACA Partner Total	$7,269 $0 $7,269	Support the ACA President and CEO; Business Development; Human Resources; and Wildlife, Fisheries and Land Management programs. Work with Program Managers and Regional Managers to ensure wildlife, fisheries and land are represented in all publications, on the web and in social media	· Provide all planned and approved communication needs as well as address any unforeseen opportunities, whether internally or sourced through third party. · Complete online seasonal job postings by mid-December 2015. · Post Report Series by the end of April 2016. · Improve program representation in all materials by working closely with Program Managers and Regional Managers. · Develop key communications materials to ensure appropriate branding and messaging (e.g., media releases, fact sheets, poster templates, presentations). · Coordinate and/or facilitate support for program/project operations such as lake aeration notices and hay tender ads.
Publications/Print			
Project		**Primary Purpose**	**Expected Outcomes**
Conservation Magazine **Spring/ Summer** **Fall/ Winter** ACA Partner Total	$57,216 $35,000 $92,216	Provides the opportunity to discover and connect with the people and research that impact the conservation of Alberta's wildlife, fish and habitat.	· Produce, publish, promote and deliver 30,000 hard copies of *Conservation Magazine*, seasonally in spring and fall, with digital versions available online.
Alberta Discover Guide ACA Partner Total	$24,221 $65,000 $89,221	Provides a comprehensive reference to several hundred sites conserved for the purpose of habitat protection and made available for recreational use by our stakeholders. Promotes the value of habitat conservation and the benefits of securing that habitat for wildlife.	· Produce, publish, promote and deliver 80,000 hard copies of the Guide with digital versions available online. · Foster relationships with conservation partners who are key contributors to the Guide, such as Alberta Fish & Game Association (AFGA) and its affiliated clubs, Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) and Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC). · Promote the benefits of habitat conservation and how to make land donations.

Annual Operating Plan ACA $8,432 Partner $0 Total $8,432	Ensure our stakeholders are aware of how ACA is spending funds, what projects are being undertaken and how our yearly activities link to our *Strategic Business Plan*.	· Prepare the *Annual Operating Plan* draft for ACA Board of Directors meeting, December 2014. · Coordinate, edit and design the *Annual Operating Plan*. · Complete and post the *Annual Operating Plan*, after ACA Board of Directors approval, in April 2015, to coincide with the next fiscal year, which starts April 1, 2015.
Annual Report ACA $10,058 Partner $0 Total $10,058	Show stakeholders how ACA has spent funding, what conservation outcomes have been achieved and how ACA has performed relative to our stated goals.	· Produce the *Annual Report* by September 2015. · Report audited financial statements to stakeholders. · Coordinate editing and post ~45 resource program annual summaries (Wildlife, Fisheries, Land) online by April 15, 2016.
Grant Fund Annual Report ACA $3,540 Partner $0 Total $3,540	Provide stakeholders information about the ACA Grants Fund projects awarded, allocations and activities.	· Post and promote interim reports, annual report, grant information and important deadlines. · Produce the *Grant Fund Annual Report* by October 2015 for grant eligible committee meeting in December 2015.
Conservation Site Signs ACA $3,109 Partner $0 Total $3,109	Work with the land and fisheries teams to produce branded Conservation Site Signs and Fisheries Access Site signs. *The budget is allocated within the Land Management and Fisheries programs*	· Design and coordinate proofing, quotes and printing for approximately 50 signs per year for placement at Conservation Sites. · Design, produce and coordinate signs as required for all resource programs inclusive of but not limited to site boundaries, way-finding and thin ice warning

Guide App

Project	Primary Purpose	Expected Outcomes
Alberta Outdoor Adventure Guide iPhone app ACA $11,667 Partner $0 Total $11,667	Provide digital version of the Guide for mobile devices which makes planning and finding Conservation Sites to hunt, fish, forage and explore easier.	· Implement two updates to the Alberta Outdoor Adventure Guide iPhone app. · Notify users through the in-app notification about when ponds and lakes are stocked with trout, the latest events, new berry-picking locations, and conservation concerns, such as invasive aquatic species information. · Increase users by 20%.

Website

Project	Primary Purpose	Expected Outcomes
Website Updates ACA $18,206 Partner $0 Total $18,206	The ACA external websites provide an accessible information gateway that engages users and profiles our conservation projects, member groups, corporate partners in conservation, events and publications.	· Maintain strong monthly website traffic throughout the year · Continually monitor and update website content to ensure the most recent and accurate information is provided and that all links, downloads and postings are valid and functional. · Monitor and track Google analytics and provide monthly update to Management Team. · Implement search engine optimization practices at all times.
Website Maintenance and Development ACA $42,415 Partner $0 Total $42,415	Provide an accessible information gateway to engage users and enhance the profile of ACA and our member groups.	· Ensure ACA external websites use current technology and design in order to provide a visually appealing and functional resource for the general public and our stakeholders. · Adjust all website templates to more efficiently accommodate mobile devices.

Table 7: Education and Outreach Events for 2015/16

Project	Primary Purpose	Expected Outcomes
Peregrine Cameras ACA $13,025 Partner $0 Total $13,025	Connect with the general public by providing a bird's-eye view into the daily lives of peregrine falcons as they return to Edmonton to secure nesting sites, fight for mates, defend their territory, catch food and raise their young.	· Promote Peregrine Cameras, primarily through social media. · Maintain remote camera infrastructure at three existing sites (UofA, Bell Tower, Weber Centre) · Add one (or more) additional remote camera(s) at known peregrine nesting site(s). · Educate the public about peregrine falcon behaviour, biology and its Threatened status in Alberta. · Increase traffic to our website. · Explore opportunities for similar remote camera coverage of other species.
Taber Pheasant Festival ACA $165,817 Partner $50,000 Total $215,817	Introduce youth and novice hunters to pheasant hunting including necessary skills as well as responsible and ethical hunting practices. Provide additional pheasant hunting opportunities for all hunters. Promote altered municipal and farming practices that support wildlife and self-sustaining pheasant populations.	· Continue to work with local organizations and businesses to support and/or coordinate the Taber Pheasant Festival. · Promote Taber Pheasant Festival through various media. · Design event materials (e.g., signs, banners, tickets, posters, presentations). · Manage the online registration system and questions. · Increase awareness of upland game bird habitat requirements and increase landowner participation in habitat enhancement projects. · Encourage continued interest in pheasant and upland game bird hunting beyond the event. · Increase overall number of youth and families hunting upland game birds each year (increased hunting licence sales).
Archery Days ACA $8,732 Partner $1,000 Total $9,732	Introduce and encourage youth and families in communities across Alberta to get outdoors and try archery.	· Continue to work with local organizations and businesses to support and/or coordinate youth archery events at several communities across Alberta. · Promote Archery Days through various media. · Increase the total number of Archery Days events each year. · Ensure youth are taught basic archery practices in a safe and responsible environment. · Encourage continued interest in archery and/or bowhunting beyond the event.
Kids Can Catch ACA $7,947 Partner $20,000 Total $27,947	Introduce and encourage youth and families in communities across Alberta to get outdoors and enjoy angling.	· Continue to work with local organizations and businesses to support and/or coordinate youth fishing events at several communities across Alberta. · Promote Kids Can Catch through various media. · Increase the total number of Kids Can Catch events each year. · Ensure youth are taught responsible and ethical angling practices in a safe environment. · Increase awareness and use of stocked and aerated lakes, often near urban centres. · Encourage continued interest in angling beyond the event. · Increase overall number of youth and families fishing each year (increased fishing licence sales).

Waterfowl Warmup ACA $8,693 Partner $15,000 Total $23,693	Provide a unique event opportunity for the general public, businesses and conservation organizations to support the Report A Poacher program.	· Increase awareness and funds for the Report A Poacher program. · *Promote responsible and ethical hunting practices.* · Stengthen corpoarte relationships in the pusuit of long-term partnerships in conservation.
WIN card		
Project	**Primary Purpose**	**Expected Outcomes**
WIN Card Reimbursement ACA $19,400 Partner $0 Total $19,400	Encourage recruitment of young people into hunting and allow ACA and our member groups to connect with new hunters when they purchase their first WIN card.	· Increase the number of youth 12 to 17 years old who complete the Alberta Hunter Education Instructors' Association hunter education program. · Introduce and connect young hunters to programs, information and other groups to enhance their experience.

3.2 Wildlife

Wildlife conservation, at its core relies on the active engagement of regular people. Many conservation actions require trade-offs to meet desired outcomes, so a more engaged society is essential to building support for the tough decisions ahead. A fundamental shift in our programming over the past few years has been the integration and collaboration with citizen scientists, key stakeholder groups and landowners in both the planning and delivery stages of projects. This is evident in our partnership with the Alberta Trappers' Association (ATA). We work together to better understand wolverine distribution and the conservation risks associated with human disturbance. This grassroots effort involves dozens of trappers volunteering their time and expertise to collect field data in the backcountry. And again working with ATA, we're extending this collaboration to include a University of Alberta (U of A) graduate student project designed to reveal the impacts of industrial activity in wolverine territory.

The grasslands of southern Alberta are home to a diverse range of species that often rely on intact native habitat. Through the Multisar project, we work hand in hand with ranchers in the Milk River drainage to retain and improve grassland as well as riparian systems vital for wildlife in this region. This collaboration now affects more than 330,000 acres of habitat. We also collaborate with the Alberta Fish and Game Association and local landowners in this grassland system to enhance the movement of pronghorn by upgrading fences with wildlife friendly characteristics.

Landowners are vital partners in our upland gamebird program where we work with farmers to enhance habitat. We've initiated two demonstration projects to trial methods for improving upland bird densities and biodiversity on modern, profitable farming operations. Going forward, we'll continue hosting advisory workshops tailored to the farming community, and offering insight into working farm practices that can benefit productivity and wildlife. Other upland efforts include delivering the Alberta pheasant release program, improving hunter access and connectivity along public right-of-ways, assessing gamebird abundance in select areas, and implementing enhancements that improve their numbers over the long term.

In the mountainous areas we're collaborating with multiple partners to identify grizzly and black bear rub objects in bear management area 5 for a census for 2016. Much of our 2015 efforts will focus on private land and grazing lease areas where ranchers play a role in grizzly bear conservation.

Our goal for species-at-risk projects is conserving habitat that supports vulnerable species with actions identified in recovery plans. Importantly, these actions positively impact other species as well, such as deer, sharp-tailed grouse or moose, depending on the area. Coordinated efforts to develop recovery plans for species at risk are also a good model for game species. Planning activities include gaining stakeholder buy-in with monitoring built into the long-term recovery model to determine if the process is working. A study to detect amphibians through environmental DNA is also underway. It shows great promise for improving the efficiency of detecting amphibians in wetland systems.

Table 8: Wildlife Projects for 2015/16

Big Game and Furbearer Enhancement			
Project		**Primary Purpose**	**Expected Outcomes**
Pronghorn Resource Enhancement and Monitoring			
ACA	$79,591		
Partner	$93,252		
Total	$172,843		

Evaluating fence modifications to improve pronghorn movement and survival	Improve pronghorn movement.	· Evaluate fence enhancement techniques to determine BMP to improve pronghorn movement without encouraging cattle to cross fence lines. Year 6 of 8. · Communicate with stakeholders, industry, and conservation community (peer reviewed journal) to better inform them of factors impeding pronghorn movement. Ongoing.
Wildlife-friendly fencing for pronghorn	Enhance pronghorn movement at key locations.	· Provide key information to key partner (AFGA) for ranking where fence enhancements need to occur. Ongoing. · Assist AFGA with removal of barbed or page wire and replace with smooth wire at 18 inches above the ground. Ongoing.
Restoring Natural Habitat for Wildlife ACA $63,354 Partner $5,000 Total $68,354		
Pre-burn planning and post-burn monitoring for restoring wildlife habitat	Evaluate and restore natural disturbance patterns to benefit ungulate winter habitat (northwest, central and southern).	· Work towards achieving landscape, ecosystem and species level objectives identified in priority watershed subbasin plans. Ongoing. · Compare post-burn response of vegetation with baseline data six years after prescribed burn – 7,000 ha (Central – Nordegg). Year 1 of 2.
Habitat restoration for wildlife in aspen and mixed wood lands.	Identify and plan enhancements in collaboration with Land Management to restore habitat important for ungulates and upland birds on ACA managed lands.	· Identify and assist Land Management with planning small-scale stand restoration on ACA-managed lands. Year 1 of 5.
Wolverine Distribution and Conservation Risks		
Wolverine occupancy in a changing landscape (ACA/ATA partnership) ACA $294,317 Partner $45,000 Total $339,317	Identify distribution and habitat associated with wolverine occupancy.	· Design and coordinate data collection to determine wolverine occupancy and habitat use with ATA and volunteer trappers. · Present concept of unique partnership across Alberta and to international audiences, extolling the contribution that trappers are making to science-based conservation (province wide – focused in the boreal forest, winter 2014/15).
Effect of industrial disturbance on wolverine. (ACA/U of A partnership) ACA $136,979 Partner $25,000 Total $161,979	Identify if wolverines are affected by industrial disturbance in collaborative project with U of A.	· Collaborate with U of A and key members of trapping community to better understand the influence of industrial disturbance on wolverines (boreal forest). Year 2 of 4.

Wildlife Habitat in Low Disturbance Zones (WHILDZ) ACA $180,347 Partner $30,000 Total $210,347		
Surveying grizzly and black bear numbers in priority landscapes	Estimate grizzly and black bear numbers using rub object hair samples.	· Identify and map bear rub objects in bear management area 5 (BMA 5) in collaboration with partnership group. Year 2 of 4. · Engage volunteer stakeholder groups to train and plan for BMA 5 collection survey in 2016. Year 2 of 4. · Estimate minimum number of grizzly bears and black bears using DNA from hair samples taken from rub objects. Year 2 of 4.
Identify location and use of mineral licks in low disturbance areas	Communicate the value and high-use of mineral licks for ungulates in wilderness areas (low human disturbance).	· Communicate the use and importance of mineral lick sites with land use planners (forestry, energy, mining, recreation) and conservation community. Year 4 of 4.
Upland Gamebird Enhancement Program		
Project	**Primary Purpose**	**Expected Outcomes**
Upland Gamebird Enhancement and Habitat Restoration ACA $294,769 Partner $90,000 Total $384,769		
Habitat Legacy Partnership	Enhance upland andriparian habitat for upland birds in collaboration with landowners and Pheasants Forever. Long-term decrease in the need for a pheasant put and take release program in areas with suitable habitat.	· Monitor habitat enhancements (i.e., shrub survival, growth rates) and response of target species (grey partridge, pheasants, sharp-tailed grouse) on select properties. Year 2 of 10. · Monitor biodiversity (songbirds, amphibians, invertebrates) at select sites to asses if habitat improvements for upland birds also benefit wider range of species. Year 2 of 10. · Undertake habitat enhancement activities on select properties to improve upland bird densities. Ongoing. · Evaluate approaches for re-establishing upland birds (pheasants, grey partridge) in areas with suitable habitat. Year 2 of 10.
Advisory workshops	Enhance stakeholder engagement and practical knowledge through advisory workshops northwest and southern).	· Facilitate at least one advisory workshops to convey practical advice for enhancing upland bird habitat or populations. Ongoing. · Deliver at least one advisory workshop with landowners to convey practical advice to enhance habitat for sharp-tailed grouse. Ongoing.
Upland connectivity for upland birds	Enhance habitat andimprove hunter access along public right-of-ways (southern).	· Collaborate with partners to plan and implement actions that improve upland habitat along irrigation systems and public right-of-ways. Ongoing. · Collaborate with partners to identify and improve hunting access on public land along irrigation systems and public right-of-ways. Ongoing.

4-H pheasant raise and release project	Engage 4-H clubs and volunteers to raise 10,000 pheasant hens (provincial).	· Engage 4-H clubs and other volunteers enabling them to raise and release pheasant hens in select locations. Ongoing. · Communicate importance of suitable habitat with 4-H participants to foster long term interest in habitat. Ongoing.
Upland gamebird abundance surveys	Estimate the trend in upland bird numbers in select areas (northern and southern).	· Monitor upland bird trends and densities in comparison with habitat at select sites. Ongoing. · Engage volunteer stakeholder groups with monitoring trends in upland bird densities. Ongoing. · Provide an annual prospectus of upland bird trends on our website in early fall. Ongoing. · Evaluate the response in numbers and recruitment of grey partridge, pheasants and sharp-tails on enhanced sites. Ongoing.
Demonstration farms for restoring upland bird densities	Collaborate with two demonstration farm partners to evaluate approaches for improving upland bird densities on modern profitable farms.	· Evaluate approaches for improving recruitment and density of upland birds (pheasants, grey partridge, sharp-tails) and other species (songbirds, amphibians, invertebrates) on modern profitable farms. Ongoing. · Baseline inventory and monitoring upland birds and biodiversity (songbirds, amphibians, invertebrates) to assess if treatments for upland birds also benefit other species. Ongoing.
Pheasant Releases to Enhance Hunting Opportunities ACA $568,569 Partner $0 Total $568,569	Enhance hunter opportunity by releasing 25,000 pheasants in select locations and, in particular, in areas with limited opportunity for native upland birds (provincial).	· Manage and coordinate pheasant release program within Alberta. Ongoing. · Engage volunteer groups to assist with delivery of pheasants at sites. Ongoing. · Evaluate the efficiency of program and satisfaction of hunters through a hunter survey (hardcopy or smartphone). Ongoing. · Update and maintain web-based platform to inform hunters of all release sites including detailed maps. Ongoing. · Identify and initiate sites in new areas in proximity to major urban areas (i.e., Edmonton and Calgary). Ongoing. · Evaluate and work with stakeholders to change historic release sites where additional hunting pressure may hinder self-sustaining populations of sharp-tailed grouse, pheasants or grey partridge. Ongoing.
Sharp-tailed Grouse Stewardship ACA $20,890 Partner $500 Total $21,390	Assess and recommend habitat enhancements that benefit sharp-tailed grouse.	· Develop enhancement actions and habitat plan that benefits sharp-tailed grouse nesting habitat on select public grazing reserves in NW Alberta. Ongoing.

Wetlands		
Project	**Primary Purpose**	**Expected Outcomes**
Amphibian Monitoring and Distribution ACA $24,783 Partner $52,560 Total $77,343		

Amphibian monitoring using environmental DNA	Develop monitoring tool to detect amphibians (10 species) using a DNA-based sampling method.	· Collaborate with genetics lab and MSc student to develop a method for detecting amphibians using genetic information. Year 3 of 3. · Test the functionality of the new eDNA protocol by running samples through one or more different labs that attempt to use this method. Year 1 of 2.
Volunteer-based monitoring Alberta Volunteer Amphibian Monitoring Program (AVAMP)	Volunteer collection of amphibian location data throughout Alberta.	· Coordinate volunteer collection of amphibian data from across Alberta (AVAMP). Ongoing. · Develop database to record contact and skill information for volunteers who assist on wildlife projects. Year 2 of 2.
Species at Risk		
Project	**Primary Purpose**	**Expected Outcomes**
Alberta Piping Plover Recovery ACA $59,047 Partner $19,000 Total $78,047	Assist recovery of piping plovers through habitat enhancements, and report on success of recovery efforts.	· Implement enhancements, including fencing, sanctuary signage, and vegetation reduction, at select properties. Ongoing. · Conduct inventory of plovers at select lakes. Ongoing. · Submit peer-reviewed paper focused on the success of population recovery using nest exclosures. Year 3 of 3.
Alberta Wildlife Status Reports ACA $31,784 Partner $22,600 Total $54,384	Coordinate and develop detailed status reports.	· Initiate new status reports. On-going · Provide data to ESRD for entry in Fisheries and Wildlife Management Information System (FWMIS) or to Alberta Conservation Information Management System (ACIMS) (for plants). On-going
MULTISAR ACA $171,382 Partner $270,475 Total $441,857		
Grassland habitat conservation strategies on working ranches	Engage landowners in stewardship planning to conserve wildlife habitat along the Milk River Basin.	· Initiate habitat conservation strategies at three to four ranches. Suspended in lieu of HSP funding issues. Evaluation of habitat conservation strategies on select properties. Ongoing. · Initiate enhancements targeted at sage grouse in areas identified as critical habitat. Suspended in lieu of HSP funding issues. · Ongoing consultation and relationship building with landowners and stakeholder community. Ongoing.
Grassland and riparian habitat enhancements on working ranches	Improve upland and riparian habitat.	· Implement enhancements on partnering ranches. Ongoing. · Restoration of native prairie with wild harvested silver sage, wild vetch, golden bean, and prairie purple clover plugs. Ongoing. · Evaluate habitat enhancements and thistle control at northern leopard frog stewardship sites. Ongoing.
Grassland monitoring and evaluation on working ranchlands	Evaluate changes in biodiversity on ranches and enhancement sites.	· Inventory and monitor response of indicator species (flora and fauna) at ranches enrolled in program including but not limited to songbirds, short-horned lizard, sharp-tailed grouse, ferruginous hawk, and rattlesnake. Ongoing.

3.3 Fisheries

Our Fisheries Program helps sustain the diversity and abundance of fish populations and the habitats supporting them. It is also designed to support fishing as a recreational use by Albertans and to ensure that these opportunities are maintained for future generations. Focal program areas for 2015/16 are: 1) Enhanced Sport Fisheries, 2) Sport Fisheries Evaluations, and 3) Species Recovery and Management Plans.

Enhanced Sport Fisheries

In previous years, Enhanced Sport Fisheries included primarily Lake Aeration and Enhanced Fish Stocking (EFS) projects. In 2015/16, we expand activities in this category via the addition of new lakes, new fish species/strains, the restoration of collapsed sport fisheries (i.e., Isle and Hasse lakes), re-establishment of native species sport fishery at Joker Lake after winterkill, and the establishment of a new walleye fishery at Sawn Lake. These projects provide Albertans with recreational angling opportunities in areas of the province where fishing opportunities do not otherwise exist. The preponderance of projects in this category reflects our emphasis on the enhancement and development of recreational fishing opportunities across the province.

Aerated lakes are typically shallow, eutrophic, experience prolonged ice cover and are prone to both summerkills and winterkills. Through aeration, we maintain dissolved oxygen at levels that promote year-round survival of stocked trout. In addition to the 18 existing aerated lakes, we will develop winter aeration facilities at two to four new lakes in 2015/16.

Through EFS, we stock approximately 120,000 catchable-sized (i.e., 20 cm) trout into 60 lakes each year, creating "put-and-take fisheries" that allow anglers to harvest up to five fish per day. Most stocked lakes are close to towns and cities, making them popular family destinations. Since 1998, when ACA assumed responsibility for the EFS, we have stocked only rainbow trout in our ponds. In 2015/16, we will introduce brown trout into a select number of ponds to provide anglers with diversity in their fishing experience. Similarly, we will conduct pilot surveys at select ponds to identify additional new fish species/strains to help increase diversity at our stocked ponds. Alberta anglers are continually requesting diversity in stocking opportunities; a new species will help provide such an opportunity

The sport fisheries restoration project seeks to restore once popular walleye and trout fisheries at Isle and Hasse lakes, respectively, that collapsed in recent years due to accelerated eutrophication. This is a bold initiative that requires multidisciplinary and multi-stakeholder collaborative effort for successful rehabilitation and restoration. In 2015/16, we will establish a stakeholder support group and partnerships, as well as develop short and long-term strategies.

Sport Fisheries Evaluations

We monitor sport fisheries for angler use, harvest and associated demographics. Results from these surveys feed directly into ESRD fisheries management plans and form the basis for fishing regulation changes. They also help determine the effectiveness of new management strategies, such as the special walleye fishing licence. For 2015/16 we will conduct surveys on two lakes.

Species Recovery and Management Plans

This area of work includes projects that involve the inventory and assessment of priority fish species across the province, providing information on population structure, abundance, distribution and life history strategies. Our studies generate critical information required for the development of key provincial and federal conservation initiatives and resource management policies. They include the Alberta Fish Sustainability Index (FSI), Species Recovery and Management Plans, Alberta Wildlife Status Reports, and COSEWIC Species Status Assessments. The FSI is a new approach developed by ESRD to assess, summarize, and communicate the status of fish populations in the province. Focal species for our 2015/16 surveys were selected to address specific needs of the FSI or species recovery plans identified in consultation with ESRD.

Table 9: Fisheries Projects for 2015/16

Enhanced Sport Fisheries			
Project		**Primary Purpose**	**Expected Outcomes**
Lake Aeration ACA $228,319 Partner $24,000 Total $252,319		Create or enhance recreational angling opportunities for Albertans by aerating lakes to promote year-round survival of stocked fish.	· Prevent summerkill and winterkill of stocked trout in 18 waterbodies distributed within ACA regional boundaries as follows: – Northwest Region (six waterbodies): Cecil Thompson Pond and Figure Eight, Swan, Sulphur, East Dollar and Spring lakes. – Central Region (seven waterbodies): Beaver, Mitchell, Fiesta and Birch lakes, Ironside and Boehlke ponds, and Hansen's Reservoir. – Southern Region (one waterbody): Coleman Fish and Game Pond. – Northeast Region (four waterbodies): Muir, Spring, and Millers lakes and Radway pond. · Ongoing.
New Lake Aeration Development ACA $118,585 Partner $112,954 Total $231,539		Use aeration as habitat enhancement technique to facilitate year-round survival of stocked fish.	· Develop aeration facilities to facilitate overwintering survival of stocked trout. Target waterbodies include West Dollar, Grovedale, and Winchell lakes and Hansen's Reservoir. · 1 year.
Enhanced Fish Stocking (EFS) ACA $324,916 Partner $13,500 Total $338,416		Stock trout into waterbodies to provide Albertans with recreational angling opportunities in areas of the province where such fishing opportunities do not otherwise exist.	· Stock 115,000 (20 cm) rainbow trout into 60 waterbodies. Up to eight select waterbodies will be stocked with an additional 5,000 brown trout to provide anglers with diversity in fishing experience. · Ongoing.
Stocked Trout Survival ACA $46,510 Partner $0 Total $46,510		Assess effectiveness of avian predation control methods on ACA stocked ponds.	· Deploy and investigate effectiveness of avian predator control measures on two sites (Tees Pond and Mirror Reservoir). · Monitor two sites, Bashaw Pond and Windsor Lake, for avian predation using trail cameras – anecdotal evidence suggests these ponds may be experiencing substantial avian predation. · Deploy data loggers in 12 ponds throughout the summer to monitor summer temperature and dissolved oxygen conditions. · Year 2 of 2.
Fish Stocking Expansion – New Lakes ACA $114,186 Partner $0 Total $114,186		Expand scope and diversity in fish stocking activities: identify and evaluate new waterbodies for stocking to increase recreational fishing opportunities, particularly close to urban areas.	· Develop shortlist of candidate new waterbodies for EFS and aeration using various tools (e.g., consultations with fisheries and land managers, municipal and city governments, local angling groups etc. and remote sensing). · Conduct preliminary field assessment of candidate waterbodies in priority areas. Initial assessments in 2014/15 identified following areas as priority for EFS expansion: Edmonton, Calgary, Medicine Hat, and Airdrie. · Ongoing.

Fish Stocking Expansion – New Species/Strains ACA $82,276 Partner $0 Total $82,276	Expand scope and diversity in fish stocking activities: investigate suitability of new fish species/ strains to complement currently stocked rainbow trout under the ACA fish stocking project.	· Establish pilot fisheries with new species/strains at select EFS ponds. · Describe angler use and satisfaction with the pilot fishery. · Describe growth and survival of the new fish species/strains. · Year 1 of 2.
Sport Fisheries Restoration at Isle and Hasse lakes ACA $67,146 Partner $0 Total $67,146	Restore sport fisheries at Isle and Hasse lakes.	· Re-establish viable sport fish populations at Isle and Hasse lakes. · Year 1: a) establish current fish community composition; b) identify and quantify sources of stress to lakes using GIS-based land-use; c) develop phosphorus budget using ALCES model; d) establish partnerships and stakeholder support groups through public consultations and engagement; e) develop short- and long-term strategies. · Year 1 of 5.
Sawn Lake Walleye Fishery Development ACA $43,616 Partner $0 Total $43,616	Expand scope and diversity in fish stocking activities: re-engage in efforts to establish self-sustaining walleye fishery at Sawn Lake.	· Establish self-sustaining walleye population at Sawn Lake by transferring adult fish from within drainage basin donor lakes (e.g., Haig Lake); may require multiple year transfers. · Year 1 - scoping activities include field surveys to determine current fish community composition and existing (if any) walleye population structure, donor lakes identification, identification of logistic needs, public/interest group consultations, etc. · Year 1 of 4.
Winterkill Fishery Restoration ACA $25,646 Partner $0 Total $25,646	Expand scope and diversity in fish stocking activities: re-establish northern pike and yellow perch populations at Joker Lake after winterkill event.	· Transfer yellow perch and other forage fish from within drainage basin donor sites to Joker Lake to restore yellow perch and enhance pike populations. · Year 1 of 2.
Sport Fisheries Evaluations		
Project	**Primary Purpose**	**Expected Outcomes**
Angler Survey on Aerated Lakes ACA $88,877 Partner $5,500 Total $94,377	Provide information to aid sport fisheries management.	· Describe angling effort, harvest and associated fisheries demographics at Swan and Spring lakes during summer and winter. · Use of data by ESRD to formulate fisheries management plans. · 1 year.

Species Recovery and Management Plans			
Project		**Primary Purpose**	**Expected Outcomes**
Swan River Arctic Grayling: A Stock and Watershed Connectivity Survey ACA $96,595 Partner $0 Total $96,595		Collect data on distribution and population demographics of Arctic grayling and on watershed connectivity in the Swan River watershed to aid development of management plans.	· Determine distribution and population demographics of Arctic grayling in the Swan River system. · Evaluate watershed connectivity and relate to remediation efforts occurring in the watershed. · Year 2 of 2.
Westslope Cutthroat Trout Recovery and Management ACA $123,792 Partner $0 Total $123,792		Determine population structure and critical habitat use and threats for pure strain populations to aid implementation of recovery plans.	· Determine juvenile and adult abundances in key sub-watersheds. · Identify potential spawning reaches. · Describe sedimentation rates in key sub-watersheds and spawning reaches. · Facilitate delineation and expansion of the protected key habitat areas. · Prioritize areas for reclamation. · Year 1 of 2.
Arctic Grayling Adult Density ACA $74,895 Partner $0 Total $74,895		Collect information to address data deficiencies identified by ESRD for Arctic grayling FSI development.	· Determine adult density and population structure in data deficient HUCs (Hierarchical Unit Code): Kakwa, Cutbank, Wentzel, Upper Little Smoky, Dog, Birch, Whitesand, Yates, and Buffalo rivers. · Year 1 of study will focus on the Kakwa River watershed. · Year 1 of 4.
North Saskatchewan River Drainage FSI Data Gaps ACA $54,647 Partner $47,795 Total $102,442		Describe fish distribution and stream habitat in areas of mutual interest to provincial resource managers and industrial partners with emphasis on priority species for FSI development.	· Fish inventory and stream habitat quality in priority watersheds within Sundre Forest Products Forestry Management Area to aid development of management plans. · Describe bull trout distribution and abundance to address FSI data deficiencies. · Year 1 of 3.

3.4 Land Management

The Land Management program focuses on conserving, protecting and enhancing wildlife and fish habitat. It also promotes the recreational value of conserved land. The major activities for 2015/16 are: 1) Habitat Conservation, 2) Conservation Site Management, 3) Riparian Conservation, and 4) Recreational Opportunity Initiatives.

Partnerships are an integral component of the Land Management program. These partnerships require continuous communication with other conservation organizations, member groups, ESRD, corporate partners, our wildlife and fisheries teams, and other stakeholders, including hunters and anglers.

Habitat Conservation

Habitat conservation initiatives secure important wildlife and fish habitat within 27 focus areas in Alberta—for our enjoyment now and for generations to come. We use several methods to secure land including direct purchase, land donations, and habitat lease agreements through the Landowner Habitat Program. Our conservation efforts provide recreational opportunities such as hunting, fishing, photography, hiking, berry picking and wildlife viewing for Albertans and our visitors.

ACA Conservation Site Management

We maintain and manage over 200,000 acres of habitat within Alberta. Fisheries access sites, managed Crown properties, ACA-titled lands, lands with conservation easements, and past stewardship activities—our management activities cover a wide range of lands. We are responsible for restoring and enhancing habitat, controlling invasive species, maintaining and upgrading sites and facilities, addressing industrial referrals, developing management plans for Conservation Sites we own or manage, and installing new signage on all ACA Conservation Sites.

Riparian Conservation

Riparian Conservation involves various management techniques to restore and enhance riparian habitat. We use a variety of tools, including streambank fencing, off-channel watering for livestock, bank stabilization, education and outreach, and habitat retention agreements, to enhance and protect riparian habitat. Riparian initiatives are accomplished in collaboration with private landowners; watershed groups; industry; federal, provincial and municipal governments; and a variety of granting agencies and other stakeholders.

Recreational Opportunity Initiatives

Recreational opportunity initiatives increase and create an awareness of outdoor opportunities for Albertans. It is an outcome of all Land Management projects. The *Alberta Discover Guide* and the *Alberta Outdoor Adventure Guide* iPhone app, developed with ACA's Communications program, are important tools that highlight the value of habitat conservation and the diversity of recreational opportunities available to Albertans. The Guide currently features 746 ACA and partner-owned sites across the province, including those owned by Ducks Unlimited Canada and Alberta Fish and Game Association. Another focus is the Use Respect – Ask First program that fosters respect between land users and landowners, increasing responsible access to privately owned lands.

Larches Conservation Site south boundary
photo: ACA, Mandy Couve

Table 10: Land Management Projects for 2015/16

Habitat Conservation		
Project	**Primary Purpose**	**Expected Outcomes**
Habitat Securement Fund ACA $744,831* Partner $0 Total $744,831* * includes $600,000 from the Habitat Securement Fund for land purchases.	Identify and conserve high-priority wildlife and fish habitat through ACA's Habitat Securement Fund and through collaboration with other conservation partners.	· Secure 1,000 acres of habitat through land purchases and land donations. · Maintain, enhance and expand securement partnerships. · Increase sustainable recreational opportunities across the province. · Provide information to the public that makes it easier for them to enjoy the outdoors, such as the *Alberta Discover Guide* the *Alberta Outdoor Adventure Guide* app, articles in *Conservation Magazine* and on our external website.
Corporate Partners Program (Securement) ACA $70,949 Partner $1,400,000* Total $1,470,949* *includes $1.4 million in donated funds for land purchases.	Conserve, enhance and restore priority wildlife and fish habitat with corporate partners.	· Secure 1,250 acres of habitat through direct purchase within focus areas. · Restore and enhance habitat on conserved lands (where applicable). · Maintain and enhance current corporate partnerships. · Increase the number of partners actively donating to ACA (one new partner). · Increase sustainable recreational opportunities across the province.
Landowner Habitat Program ACA $78,564 Partner $29,508 Total $108,072	Conserve important habitat on privately owned lands through habitat lease agreements.	· Protect a minimum of 750 acres of important wildlife and fish habitat using 5- to 20-year term habitat retention agreements. · Enhance sustainable recreational opportunities on private lands.
Conservation Site Management		
Project	**Primary Purpose**	**Expected Outcomes**
Conservation Site Management ACA $648,257 Partner $216,312 Total $864,569	Manage, enhance and maintain ACA Conservation Sites to provide a diversity of habitat for a variety of fish and wildlife species.	· Manage, enhance and maintain nearly 200,000 acres of habitat on over 300 Conservation Sites in the province. · Complete inspections on 60% of ACA-managed Conservation Sites. · Install new signage on 14 ACA Conservation Sites. · Enhance wildlife and fish habitat on 12 Conservation Sites. · Maintain and develop collaborative partnerships to enhance management of Conservation Sites. · Enhance sustainable recreational opportunities on ACA-owned and managed sites.
Management Plan Development ACA $94,609 Partner $0 Total $94,609	Develop management plans for Conservation Sites that ACA owns or manages.	· Develop habitat management and enhancement objectives, and identify project partner roles and responsibilities for priority Conservation Sites. · Complete management plans on 100% of titled lands acquired in 2015/16. · Complete new management plans for any Crown sites in which we are seeking a new disposition in 2015/16. · Work with partners and update management plans where required.

Fisheries Access Site Management ACA $185,570 Partner $65,000 Total $250,570	Maintain and enhance fisheries access sites that support and increase recreational angling opportunities across the province.	· Manage and maintain 28 fisheries access sites across the province. · Install new ACA signage at three fisheries access sites. · Complete infrastructure and access upgrades at three fisheries access sites. · Maintain infrastructure at all fisheries access sites. · Continue providing access for anglers to key streams, rivers, lakes and trout ponds. · Maintain and develop collaborative partnerships to assist with maintenance costs associated with managing fisheries access sites. · Identify new fisheries access site opportunities and set priorities for future developmentss.

Riparian Conservation

Project	Primary Purpose	Expected Outcomes
Riparian Conservation 1) Owl River 2) Beaverlodge River 3) Edson River 4) South Riparian Conservation 5) North Raven and Raven Rivers ACA $155,310 Partner $735,454 Total $890,764	Continue to enhance, restore and protect riparian habitat through collaboration with private landowners, watershed groups, government, industry and other stakeholders.	· Establish 10 to 15 new riparian conservation projects and associated landowner agreements (e.g., fencing, off-channel watering, habitat lease agreements, tree planting, bank stabilization). · Increase public interest and awareness of riparian conservation through signage, advertisements, community outreach, public presentations, direct contact with key property owners who manage riparian habitat, etc. · Complete Cows and Fish health assessments and inventories at new and existing project locations, and conduct water sampling to monitor riparian conditions. · Participate in watershed groups, councils and stewardship networks.

Recreational Opportunity Initiatives

Project	Primary Purpose	Expected Outcomes
Use Respect - Ask First ACA $500 Partner $0 Total $500	Increase recreational access opportunities on privately owned lands by promoting the *Use Respect – Ask First* program.	· Distribute signage to increase awareness of Use Respect (over 10,000 distributed to date). · Foster respect between land users and landowners. · Deliver program in collaboration with other conservation partners. · Increase awareness and enhance hunting and angling opportunities on privately owned lands across Alberta.
Albera Discover Guide Dollars allocated in Information, Education, and Communications	Promote the value of habitat conservation and the diversity of recreational opportunities available on ACA-owned and partner Conservation Sites.	Review and update the Conservation Site database with new ACA Conservation Sites and partner-owned properties for the 8th edition of the Guide (2015/16).

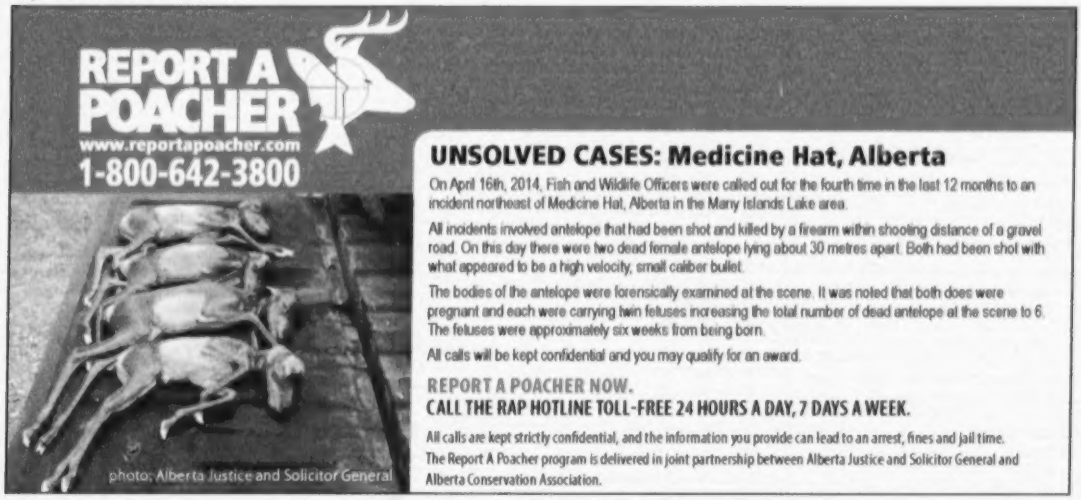
4.0 Report A Poacher

As part of the Report A Poacher (RAP) program, we work with Alberta Justice and Solicitor General, Fish & Wildlife Enforcement Branch (AJSG) as well as ESRD to ensure RAP retains a high profile and remains an important resource for the general public. As such, ACA is responsible for administering program funds and promotional activities. In 2015/16, we will continue to: 1) identify ways to educate the public about poaching in Alberta, 2) refine various promotional aspects such as the RAP education trailer 3) improve public awareness of and access to the program, 4) support Fish & Wildlife Enforcement Branch with funding, and 5) distribute cash rewards to members of the public who help in charging poachers.

Table 11: Report A Poacher for 2015/16

Project		Primary Purpose	Expected Outcomes
Report A Poacher Promotion		Continue promotion of anti-poaching campaign. Provide support for the RAP toll free phone line.	· Increase public awareness and understanding of poaching and maintain/increase use of RAP program by the general public through: - Using social media to increase RAP program exposure and use. - Completing update of RAP education trailer. - Maintaining sufficient stock of promotional items used for trade shows and community/stakeholder events, as well as research new items that maximize exposure · RAP toll free line has an operator available at all times, with increased capacity during peak periods.
ACA	$149,507		
Partner	$0		
Total	$149,507		
Enforcement Funding		Provide funding to Alberta Justice and Solicitor General Fish and Wildlife Enforcement Branch.	· Improved effectiveness of Alberta Justice and Solicitor General Fish and Wildlife Enforcement Branch.
ACA	$80,000		
Partner	$0		
Total	$80,000		
RAP Rewards		Provide funding for rewards paid to members of the public who provide information leading to a poaching-related conviction.	· Increased public participation in the RAP program through monetary incentives.
ACA	$60,000		
Partner	$0		
Total	$60,000		

Report A Poacher Advertisement


REPORT A POACHER
www.reportapoacher.com
1-800-642-3800
UNSOLVED CASES: Medicine Hat, Alberta
On April 16th, 2014, Fish and Wildlife Officers were called out for the fourth time in the last 12 months to an incident northeast of Medicine Hat, Alberta in the Many Islands Lake area.
All incidents involved antelope that had been shot and killed by a firearm within shooting distance of a gravel road. On this day there were two dead female antelope lying about 30 metres apart. Both had been shot with what appeared to be a high velocity, small caliber bullet.
The bodies of the antelope were forensically examined at the scene. It was noted that both does were pregnant and each were carrying twin feluses increasing the total number of dead antelope at the scene to 6. The feluses were approximately six weeks from being born.
All calls will be kept confidential and you may qualify for an award.
REPORT A POACHER NOW.
CALL THE RAP HOTLINE TOLL-FREE 24 HOURS A DAY, 7 DAYS A WEEK.
All calls are kept strictly confidential, and the information you provide can lead to an arrest, fines and jail time.
The Report A Poacher program is delivered in joint partnership between Alberta Justice and Solicitor General and Alberta Conservation Association.
photo: Alberta Justice and Solicitor General

5.0 ACA Grants

ACA has three separate grants that are available through open competition:

1. ACA Conservation, Community and Education Grants supports conservation activities by individuals, organizations, and communities that contribute to fish and wildlife population conservation and the conservation or enhancement of fish and wildlife habitats, or to the understanding, appreciation and use of the natural environment. Projects that increase participation in and awareness of outdoor opportunities, while developing knowledge and respect for conservation, are funded through this grant.
2. ACA Research Grants funds high-quality research projects on wildlife, fish and habitat that inform the effective management of wildlife and fish populations or habitat in Alberta. These grants are generally applied for by professional researchers but are available to any individual, organization or community that can provide a high-quality research proposal.
3. ACA Grants in Biodiversity provide research funds to outstanding graduate students doing Alberta-based research. The mandate of the program is to train future conservation professionals, while at the same time increasing knowledge of the flora and fauna of Alberta, covering broadly the fields of biodiversity, conservation biology and ecology. This grant is administered in collaboration with the Alberta Co-operative Conservation Research Unit, which represents a consortium of Alberta universities, including University of Alberta, University of Calgary and the University of Lethbridge. This grant is available only to graduate students undertaking research within Alberta (they may be attending universities outside of the province, but their research must be Alberta-based).

A fourth grant, the ACA Chair in Fisheries and Wildlife Grant is made available to ensure the ACA Chair in Fisheries and Wildlife is able to provide a link between academic research and ACA and other resource management personnel.

Funded project: Experimental translocations of Ord's kangaroo rats photo: Lia Brands

Table 12: Grants Program for 2015/16

Project	Primary Purpose	Expected Outcomes
ACA Conservation, Community and Education Grants ACA $901,901 Partner $0 Total $901,901	This fund supports conservation activities by individuals, organizations, and communities that contribute to fish and wildlife population health and the health of their environments, and to the understanding, appreciation and use of those environments. The grant funds projects that increase participation in and awareness of outdoor opportunities, while developing knowledge and respect for conservation.	· Contribute to healthy wildlife and fish populations, to a healthy environment for wildlife and fish in Alberta, and to the understanding, appreciation and use of that environment.
ACA Research Grants ACA $329,986 Partner $0 Total $329,986	This grant funds high quality wildlife, fish and habitat research.	· Contribute to effective management of natural resources in Alberta.
ACA Grants in Biodiversity ACA $175,000 Partner $50,000 Total $225,000	Support the training of future professional biologists and facilitate graduate student research that focuses on the conservation of Alberta's biological diversity.	· Participate as a member of the Grants Program Committee that awards these funds to select graduate students. · Support high-quality graduate research.
ACA Chair in Fisheries and Wildlife at the U of A ACA $20,500 Partner $0 Total $20,500	Provide educational initiatives to wildlife professionals through the ACA Chair.	· Maintain a close connection between the ACA Chair and ACA programs. · Ensure research knowledge is being transferred to biologists involved in conservation, management and policy development.

6.0 Landowner Compensation and Damage Prevention

The Landowner Compensation and Damage Prevention Programs consist of the Waterfowl Crop Damage Prevention Program, Wildlife Predator Compensation Program and Shot Livestock Compensation Program. ACA is responsible for the administration and implementation of these programs in Alberta.

Waterfowl Crop Damage Prevention

This program assists agricultural producers to help prevent depredation losses to crops caused by waterfowl by providing information on loss-prevention techniques and scare cannons. These activities complement the joint federal-provincial financial compensation program, which requires that a prevention program be provided in order for agricultural producers to qualify for compensation funding.

Wildlife Predator Compensation Program

This program provides financial compensation to agricultural producers who have incurred losses to livestock (cattle, swine, sheep, goats and bison) because of predation by wildlife (bears, wolves, cougars or eagles). Assessment of losses is undertaken by Alberta Justice and Solicitor General, Fish and Wildlife Enforcement Branch (AJSG). ACA is responsible for making the compensation payments to the agricultural producers as per a set payment scheduled. In 2014/15, the federal government will supply approximately 50% of the funding required for compensation payments.

Shot Livestock Compensation Program

This program provides financial compensation to agricultural producers who have incurred losses to livestock because of accidental shooting by third parties during an open hunting season. Compensation covers losses of horses and livestock covered under the predator program, as well as veterinary costs for wounded animals. Assessment of the losses is undertaken by AJSG, while ACA is responsible for making the compensation payments to the agricultural producers as per a set payment schedule.

Table 13: Landowner Compensation and Damage Prevention Projects for 2015/16

Project		Primary Purpose	Expected Outcomes
Waterfowl Crop Damage Prevention		Provide assistance to agricultural producers in preventing crop depredation losses as a result of waterfowl.	· Provide access to information on techniques for reducing crop depredation to agricultural prodcuers. · Ensure the prevention program meets requirements so that Alberta's agricultural producers qualify for the joint federal-provincial compensation program.
ACA	$0		
Partner	$2,294		
Total	$2,294		
Wildlife Predator Compensation		Reimburse livestock producers for losses or injury to specified livestock because of predation by wolves, cougars, grizzly bears, black bears or eagles.	· Provide compensation payments within 30 days of receiving claims.
ACA	$150,000		
Partner	$150,000		
Total	$300,000		
Shot Livestock Compensation		Reimburse livestock producers for losses or injury to specified livestock as a result of accidental shooting by a third party during an open hunting season.	· Provide compensation payments within 30 days of receiving claims.
ACA	$15,000		
Partner	$0		
Total	$15,000		

7.0 Monitoring and Accountability

On time, on budget, high quality and done safely continue to be the cornerstones by which we measure every project.

Project leads are responsible for providing monthly updates, ensuring projects are on track. These updates allow us to address and resolve any issues in a timely manner. In addition, projects leads prepare annual summary reports that are posted on our website by April 30 each year. These summary reports are reviewed as part of an internal quality control process and then are reviewed externally. Posting our reports on the website allows our stakeholders to assess the quality of our work. Whether praise for a job well done or constructive criticism on how to improve our work, we encourage stakeholder feedback.

In addition to our operational controls, we continue to involve our Board of Directors in our monitoring and accountability process, through the Standards Review Committee. This committee selects a group of projects or programs and reviews their merits for scientific credibility, efficiency, and ability to positively impact conservation in Alberta. The Standards Review Committee's recommendations are brought to the Board of Directors and are given to management for immediate implementation, as required.

We assure financial accountability through a number of processes, including internal controls and a yearly external audit. We also make all financial statements available to the public on our website.

Our *Annual Report* is released each September to ESRD, our member groups and to the general public. This document clearly and concisely outlines the projects we have completed, the funds we have spent and the results we have produced. It is this document that our stakeholders should review to ensure that we are providing good conservation value.

Perhaps the most important monitoring and accountability process is our staff, who are always willing to engage with our partners, stakeholders and the general public about our organization, our work and our projects. We pride ourselves on being open and transparent and willing to answer questions about any of our projects.

Northern flicker (*Colaptes auratus*)
photo: ACA, Mike Verhage

8.0 Financial Summary

Our 2015/16 operating budget, including projected land donations and funds donated for land purchase, is $17,477,847.

In accordance with the *Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants Standards and Collection Handbook*, our year-end financial statements for land donations and funds donated for land purchase are presented as assets, rather than revenue. Showing these partner donations in our annual budget fairly represents the next 12 months of work and our efforts to increase conservation activities through non-levy funding.

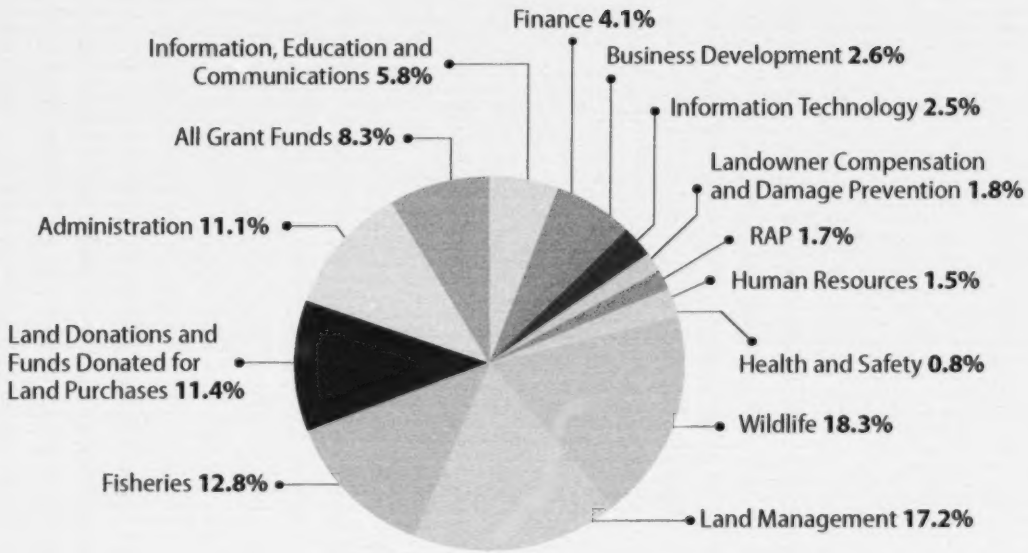
Our 2015/16 budget is based on a levy revenue projection of $13,589,000, established from 2014/15 actuals, a projection of partner (non-levy) revenue for projects of $3,888,000 and a projection of partner (non-levy) donations of land or funds for land purchase of $2 million.

$11,450,401 is allocated to Wildlife, Fisheries, Land Management (including land purchase and donations), and Information, Education and Communications programs. This amount is equivalent to 84% of the levy revenue value collected from hunters and anglers.

Table 14: Summary Budget for 2015/16

Program	ACA (Levy Funds)	Partner Funds	Total Budget
Administration	1,892,646	49,500	1,942,146
Finance	692,717	15,000	707,717
Business Development	286,076	173,084	459,160
Human Resources	267,567	0	267,567
Health and Safety	145,666	0	145,666
Information Technology	438,286	5,510	443,796
Information, Education and Communications	827,104	187,000	1,014,104
Wildlife	2,533,736	655,681	3,189,417
Fisheries	2,034,779	203,749	2,238,528
Land Management	2,009,195	999,157	3,008,352
Report A Poacher (RAP)	289,507	0	289,507
Landowner Compensation and Damage Prevention	165,000	150,000	315,000
Grants	1,406,887	50,000	1,456,887
Subtotal Budget	12,989,166	2,488,681	15,477,847
Land Donations and Funds Donated for Land Purchases	600,000	1,400,000	2,000,000
TOTAL BUDGET	13,589,166	3,888,681	17,477,847

Figure 1: 2015/16 Budget Breakdown



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Conserving Alberta's Wild Side

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